MANCHESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Addresses

DELIVERED AT THE VALEDICTORY SERVICE,

TO

STUDENTS LEAVING THE COLLEGE,

JUNE 21st, 1894,

BY THE

REV. JAMES DRUMMOND,

M.A., LL.D., D.Litt.,

AND THE

REV. JOSEPH WOOD.

"The College adheres to its original principle of freely imparting Theological knowledge without insisting on the adoption of particular Theological doctrines."

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VALEDICTORY ADDRESS,

By The Principal of the College.

It has frequently been remarked that there are two conceptions of the ministerial office, which, though they are not absolutely incompatible, nevertheless tend in different directions, and lead to strongly-contrasted results. These are the sacerdotal and the prophetic. The former is, I suppose, founded ultimately on men's sense of the awfulness of God, of his immeasurable power over them and demands upon them, and of the distance which seems to separate them from any immediate communion with him. This favours the institution of a sacred order, to be set apart for the service of God by a special consecration, to propitiate him by gifts and sacrifices and ceremonies, and to bring down and distribute his grace through fixed sacramental channels. It is not difficult to discover an element of legitimate satisfaction in this view. So long as the soul perceives a veil hanging between itself and the holy of holies, it must rejoice that some one can enter there as its representative, and intercede with that righteous Being whose fatherly love it has never known; and a religious ceremonial conducted with all the outward signs of dignity and reverence may move the heart's devotion quite independently of the inward sanctity of him by whom it is administered. Were not some of the elementary wants of the religious nature thus met by the existence of a priesthood, it would be difficult to explain the long dominance of sacerdotalism in the world.

This form of the ministry may be, and ought to be, combined with inward holiness, and with a prophet's power of proclaiming the word of God; and there can be no doubt that many members of a hierarchy have taken the highest view of their calling, and adorned it with the finest Christian graces. Nevertheless it is

fundamentally inconsistent with the Christian idea of a universal priesthood, that is, of the immediate communion of every soul with God, and of that worship in spirit and in truth which is independent of the special sacredness of time and place and ritual. Hence, as a lower type of religion, as one which in presence of higher and more spiritual thought becomes a superstition, it is beset with dangers, and exposed to evils which have rarely failed to manifest themselves. As the form, and not the spirit, is the essential thing, it is apt to degenerate into a lifeless routine, from which the soul of religion has departed. Then ceremonial rules gradually become more minute and cumbersome, and are looked upon as the one divine and imperative element in our activity. The violation of some sacred day becomes more terrible than injuring your neighbour; and if you are attentive to the rules of ritual, you may enrich yourself by devouring widows' houses. This deplorable inversion of truth produces bigotry as its natural and inevitable fruit; for bigotry is the application of false standards of judgment to human conduct, applauding that which is in itself indifferent, and condemning that which is intrinsically innocent. These evils are rife among us to-day; and though we are apt to smile at them as the weak survivals of an outgrown past, they are working with persistent and organised effort, and constitute a danger which we can no longer afford to overlook. For my part, I do not believe that the encroachments of sacerdotalism can be prevented by mere progress in the arts and sciences, but only by the energy of a lofty spiritual faith. If you destroy the higher kinds of religion, the lower will spring into a renewed vitality; for though here and there a few may think that they are satisfied and complete without religion, yet the general heart of mankind cannot live without God, and if you cannot lift it into the free communion of worship, it will retreat into slavery to those "weak and beggarly elements" from which Christianity would fain emancipate it.

The other ideal of the ministry, the prophetic, includes all that is deep and true in the sacerdotal. In a very able and interesting sermon (by the late Mr. Aubrey Moore), which I once had the privilege of hearing, it was contended, with much apparent force, that a priesthood finds its analogy in every department of human affairs. As there are men who are specially fitted for business, for statesmanship, for scholarship, for literature, for art, and act as guides and interpreters to their fellow-men in these things, so there are men who have a deeper sense of the Divine and a clearer vision of duty than others, and these stand above the ordinary level of man's life, and at once bring the mysteries of God nearer to the common apprehension, and interpret and express the common wants and aspirations before the throne of the Most High; and, accordingly, it is quite a false view which would make all men equal in their power of access to and communion with God. All this is true; but the analogy fails precisely where it is needed to give force to the argument. Everywhere else faculty is a natural gift, and belongs to no particular order; but the theory of a priesthood shuts up its faculty within a strictly defined order, and supposes that that faculty is conferred through a particular ceremony. The fundamental error of a priesthood is that it pretends to govern the gift of God by official rules, and scoffs at the free movements of the Spirit, which generally chooses for the greatest religious reformers men who have no connection with a priesthood, or, being connected with it, have broken loose from its trammels. The due execution of external functions may be taught like a trade, and handed down in an order, and men of the smallest capacity may be trained to their performance; but the vision of divine things, the heart of love, the power of appeal, are gifts of God, which will not follow our artificial arrangements, or limit themselves by the rules of any sacred order.

The true minister of Christ may have certain duties of

ceremonial to discharge, which are necessary for public service or have been found by experience to be helpful to the religious life; but with him these are secondary, not primary, and are subject to modification as altered needs may dictate. His leading and essential duties are mainly two. He has to deliver a message of truth and righteousness, appealing to the hearts of men with the power of profound conviction, and lifting them through the energy of his own faith and the persuasion of sympathy into that spiritual realm from which they are so constantly dragged down by the cares and toils of life. He may, indeed, have a word to say on fitting occasions about the ephemeral things which are discussed in newspapers and magazines; but he will address himself mainly to the everlasting wants, the recurrent sorrows, the besetting sins, the undying religious aspirations of the human soul, and seek to raise his hearers to those heights of holy contemplation where the frets and troubles, and weary, sordid ways of earth are seen as with the eye of God. To a life larger, deeper, more divine, he must bear a constant witness, and waken the sleeping echoes in the recesses of hearts where the voice of God has long been unheard. And this brings us to the second duty of the Christian minister. The word of God may come to the prophet with resistless force, and drive him into utterance as one inflamed with sacred fire, and then leave his soul like a hearth where the dead ashes lie; but in Christianity the word has become flesh, and in the minister of Christ the word should be inwrought with the substance of his being, and speak continually in the calm beauty and loving self-abnegation of his life. This is the less showy, but it is the higher gift. The prophetic power may be so far defective that it fails to impress the multitude, and affects only hearts that are ready and waiting for its appeal; but the slow and quiet influence of a saintly life accomplishes work that abides, builds up a congregation zealous of good works, and leaves a blessed and inspiring memory in hearts that silently treasure its love.

The primary qualification for a ministry of this kind is natural gift and inner impulse towards it. Without this the work must become distasteful, and being performed without spontaneous interest will fail to excite the interest of others. But when we speak of a divine call to the religious service of mankind, let us not exaggerate. There need be no miraculous voices in the night, no flood of emotion which it is impossible to resist. The strong bent of our nature towards the good and true the deep and quiet desire to set the spiritual meaning and purpose of life before our fellow-men, combined with some power of expression and appeal, may be sufficient to mark out our appointed course; and when the light is clear, we must not shrink on account of our unworthiness or insufficiency; for who is worthy, or sufficient for these things?

But given the natural aptitude, we must not leave it without cultivation; for every gift has its own ideal, which passes far beyond our powers of execution, and it is only through careful training that we become able to place upon the visible scene some representation, not altogether rude, of that which we have spiritually imagined. Our preparation must be adapted to the end which we have in view; and the chief directions which it must assume may now be very briefly indicated.

First, and above all, there must be a consecration of the heart and life to God. The extinction of selfish aims and earthly ambitions is not accomplished in a moment; and during the College years, before the cares of the world begin to press upon the mind, times should be sought for retreating into calm communion with God, and laying the soul open to the influence of his Spirit. To have life, and have it abundantly, is what we need, that we may speak what we know, and testify what we have seen, and that virtue may go out of us to heal and bless. This life, though there may be aids in its cultivation, cannot be taught like a lesson, but must be found and strengthened in holy

fellowship, and through lonely meditation and prayer. Practical power in any worthy sense, the power of kindling life in the souls of others, must be born of the Spirit.

Next to this consecration, but still occupying a high place, must come intellectual training. The accumulation of knowledge and the discipline of thought, even if they had no direct bearing on ministerial activity, would nevertheless promote its efficiency by widening the whole range of mental power, bringing improved skill and judgment into all necessary work, and storing the mind with grand ideas which would impart greater loftiness and dignity to the character. But, in fact, learning is an indispensable part of a complete minister's equipment, and to contrast the minister and the scholar is as unmeaning as to contrast the physician and the pathologist. The divorce between religion and culture is one of the most formidable perils of our time; and unless religious belief can be adjusted to the ever-growing knowledge and intelligence of man, it must die away into a pernicious superstition. He, then, who would speak the highest truth upon the greatest questions cannot have a mind too richly stored, or powers of thought too delicately trained. He must understand the present currents of opinion, and be able to apply to them a competent and impartial judgment; he must see how it is that we have come to the present state of conviction; and he must be able to set forth well-grounded ideas of his own with the ease and perspicuity of one who has mastered them, and in a style that is not unworthy of their rank. Without this intellectual preparation he may, indeed, do much kindly and useful work; but he cannot take even the humblest place among religious leaders.

The expression of the religious thought and life which have been thus acquired necessarily engages a large share of the minister's attention, and progress in this essential portion of his duties will be most rapid when he is actually engaged, from week

to week, in leading the devotions of a congregation. But for this, too, some distinct preparation must be made. The general rules of composition, and to a certain extent the acquisition of style, ought to be secured during the undergraduate period, and it may fairly be assumed that a man who has obtained a University degree is capable of writing correct and lucid English. Nevertheless a College which undertakes to train students for the ministry must endeavour to cultivate the power of expression. The more it can remove from this endeavour the character of a mere exercitation, and make it a service of genuine religion, the better, in my opinion, will be the result; and it is one of the marked advantages of our new building that our morning worship and our weekly sermons have been removed from the associations of the lecture-room into a chapel, where we meet, not for criticism and discussion, but for common worship and mutual help in the religious life. The kindly criticism which is given afterwards, while it may point out faults, or offer suggestions for improving the style or the delivery, does not interfere with the perfect sincerity with which we assemble as brethren to hold communion with the Spirit of God.

It goes without saying that, in the case of every public speaker, the vocal organ should be diligently trained, so that it may attain its full compass and power, and respond easily to the varied emotions of the soul. Here the lessons of a specialist are of the greatest value in indicating the proper line for practice; but it is persistent private practice that achieves the desired result. Sometimes genuine feeling loses all its impressiveness because the voice is incapable of reaching the appropriate tones; still, this is a smaller fault in the pulpit than the theatrical expression of emotions which are not real. I have occasionally heard young preachers exhorted to speak *as if* they were in earnest. I would rather say, *be* in earnest, and fling yourself upon your subject, and upon the hearts of your hearers, and

at the time of preaching let your speech take care of itself. There may be a faultless propriety that reaches no depths, but pleases the critics; there may be a baptism with the fire of the Holy Spirit when critics shake their heads over the faulty inflections. With the singer and the actor the execution may legitimately be admired, though even in their case a higher level may be reached; but with the preacher, if he is truly successful, the manner is forgotten in the matter, and in the total spiritual impression which he leaves upon the heart.

For pastoral work, which is not to be the routine of official duty, but the offering of a brother's love, formal rules are of little value. Useful hints and cautions may indeed be given; but every man whose work tells, will have something of his own method, and the one indispensable requisite is a quick and tender sympathy. A smile, a tear, a pressure of the hand that show what is in the heart will do more than all your attitudinising; and the man whose love flows forth as a well-spring of life does not need to be told how to comport himself beside the death-bed of a widow's only child. But sympathy may be enlarged and strengthened and made more discerning by contact with the actual needs and sufferings of men; and practical work, carried on under the guidance and advice of an experienced minister, may teach many a valuable lesson that could not be learned in the class-room. There sympathy is evoked and nurtured by real objects, and emotion does not waste itself in imaginary rapture and commiseration. The knowledge of human nature is insensibly widened, and the hasty conclusions of a momentary compassion are checked and guided by the counsels of experience. But when all is done, the one abiding rule, without which the most carefully-planned methods are vain, is to deepen your love continually by prayer, and then go to your work trusting in God to breathe his Spirit through you.

And now, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Davis, Mr. Fox, and, though

you have only been a short time with us, I will add Mr. Balmforth, it only remains for me to wish you God-speed as you go forth upon your several ways, to take up the active duties of the ministry or to continue your studies for a time elsewhere. We have helped you in your preparation for a high and unselfish calling, not as we would, but as we could. We have never forgotten that ministry of religion to which you desire to consecrate your lives, and the great claims which it will make on intellect and heart. All our studies and arrangements have been directed towards it; and we have sought, so far as opportunity permitted, to provide that many-sided culture which will enable you to turn with disciplined intelligence to various scenes of activity. Here, in Oxford, you have been placed amid the ripening intelligence and growing aspirations of young England, and you have sought for that preliminary knowledge which is indispensable to the accomplished minister, and a preparation for further study more definitely of your own choice. And lest in these retreats of learning you should become too academic, and forget the toiling multitudes, you have settled down for periods of work in town and country; and Bermondsey, Mansford Street, and George's Row, in London, Oldham Road in Manchester, Ringwood, Whitchurch, Monton, and Warrington, in addition to occasional services in various places, have given you some experience of the actual life of the minister, and enabled you to test your own powers of addressing, and labouring among, people of various kinds. To us it is always painful to part with earnest and faithful students; and still we rejoice that you are going forth to take your place in the band of workers for a free and spiritual Gospel, and we look with high hope to your future, and pray that you may be mighty, through the power of God, to the building up of truth and righteousness, and be instruments of highest blessing to many grateful hearts. With every good wish for your genuine success I bid you, in the name of the College, an affectionate farewell.

"THE DEMANDS OF THE AGE UPON THE PULPIT."

An Address to the Students of Manchester College, Oxford, June 21st, 1894,

BY THE REV. JOSEPH WOOD.

GENTLEMEN,

In offering you a welcome into the ministry I may take for granted your sense of the peculiar greatness of the vocation upon which you now enter, and your conviction that, in some way or other, the "call" has sounded in your ears which shuts you up to this path. This does not mean that at some supreme moment of decision you have become conscious of an inward imperative voice which settled the matter for you there and then, but that in the order of Providence you have felt in your gifts, in your strong desire to serve God in the holiest of all human employments, in your sympathy with men, in the opportunity which has opened before you a concurrence of indications which left no doubt in your minds as to your place and work in the world. Further, I take for granted an adequate equipment of scholarship and mental training. Not for nothing have you sojourned within these walls and sat at the feet of renowned teachers. You have embraced with ardour the intellectual discipline of this place; you have proved yourselves not unworthy of the illustrious students who have gone before you. It may also be taken for granted that you have measured the difficulties of the ministerial calling—its trials of patience and temper, its exhausting demands on the intellect and the sympathies, its frequent obscurity, its scanty remuneration, its entire lack of

worldly advancement, its many failures and disappointments. No one who knows it dare describe the ministerial life in glowing colours. Thank God it has its own exceeding great reward. But this is a reward realised only in the sanctuary of the heart, and is nothing the world can note. The difficulties, however, are apparent. Yet I would not dwell upon them, assured as I am that you have counted and will gladly pay the cost, if yours may be the privilege of making known the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

Excluding, therefore, certain things from consideration which may be taken for granted, I must also exclude a multitude of vastly interesting topics bearing on the ministerial calling, the introduction of which would only crowd with details my limited canvass. How wide is the range of work and field of interests to be considered by one about to enter the ministry! There are the varied and exacting duties of the pastoral office; there is the educational work, the social work, the need of organising power, the conduct of worship, the instruction of the young, the culture of his own religious life, and a multitude of kindred subjects for earnest thought. If I set these things aside it is not because I do not feel their importance, but because there is something of yet greater moment to which I desire to call your attention, viz.—"The Demands of the Age upon the Pulpit."

At the outset I am met by the questions, "Has not the pulpit worn itself out and become obsolete? Has not the advance of civilisation made people independent of the pulpit? Has not the press nearly extinguished the preacher?" A brilliant divine has written a book on "The Decay of the Pulpit," and it is often asserted that literature, rather than the pulpit, has become the true organ of spiritual teaching. The freest discussion of the most sacred truths is now carried on in periodicals of the highest character and widest circulation. Even newspapers have taken up the rôle of the pulpit, and side by side with the

betting news you will find a scathing denunciation by the editor, in his most moral mood, on the evils of gambling. A man can sit by his fireside and read a better discourse than he is ever likely to hear at church. At one time the pulpit supplied almost the only intellectual excitement of the great religious public. But the circle of interest has widened immensely in our time, so that the attractiveness of the pulpit has, in large measure, suffered eclipse.

Let us frankly acknowledge that there is more than a grain of truth in all this. Many reasons which at one time added to the power of the pulpit no longer obtain. Once it wielded an influence a good deal out of proportion to the ability of the man who filled it. He was backed up by a theory of the Bible and the Church, which enabled him to speak with authority. The institution had a solid weight of its own, greatly magnified by the absence of anything which could compete with it in its sphere. It is easy to be contemptuous and say that, in so blind a kingdom, a very one-eyed man might easily be king. But this would overlook one of the essential conditions of the matter. It was no light matter to be the sole witness for spiritual things amid a sordid and monotonous struggle for existence. The preacher was the angel who once a week stirred the water of the dead pool of a conventional and narrow life. In the general dearth of culture he was almost sure to be superior to his audience, and to have some real light to throw on great themes. The conditions have largely changed—not, however, with the result of lessening the value of the pulpit, but of making it possible to advance to a higher level. The spread of culture, the removal of an artificial authority, the widening knowledge of our day, the fairer hopes, and broader sympathies, have opened the way for a pulpit that shall appeal with greater force and better opportunity to reason, conscience, and the mystic susceptibilities of the spirit, so that if a man can preach indeed, if his

word is with power, never was there a time when he had a more open field for his activity, or a better chance of an appreciative audience.

Dr. Fairbairn has told us that the pulpit has lost its hold on the great masses of the working people at one end of the scale, and on the cultured folk at the other end. If this be so, it is largely the pulpit that is to blame. If men are languid, uninterested in our message, if they show far greater appreciation of books and lectures than they do of sermons, if the themes and dialect of the pulpit alike seem pointless and profitless, the fault is in us. I do not believe that the reason is to be found in the loudly-alleged alienation either of the masses or the classes from true religion. It is not religion from which they are alienated, but ecclesiasticism, professionalism, clericalism, dogmatism, an exploded theology, a presentation of religion that has no bearing on real life, the association of religion with played-out superstitions, with opposition to science, with an other-worldliness which affords no guide for life in this world, with a sickly pietism at which manliness revolts, with a narrow and poverty-stricken idea of social welfare and human society. How much of the unbelief of our times is of the texture of the unbelief of Lucretius,—a revolt against incredible conceptions of nature, man, and God. How much of the dislike to our Churches among the poor arises from the fact that we seem to have no message of hope and help to those who are struggling in the social vortex; no light to throw on social problems; that we are pledged to an economic theory which as surely breeds pauperism as a miasma breeds disease; that we explain away the Sermon on the Mount rather than apply it fearlessly to social wants; that we offer men for bread the assurance, comforting as the east wind, that in the struggle for life some *must* go to the wall! Let the pulpit once again find its point: let it speak with courage and conviction, with knowledge and sympathy, touched with the enthusiasm of

humanity, and it will lead the van of progress in the future as it has done in the past. For the pulpit has clear advantages for its own work, far above any other agency, at least for the great majority of men and women. A grand opportunity lies before it. To the end of time the coming of men face to face, heart to heart, conscience to conscience, the living eye, the living voice, the magnetism of the personal presence, the virtue that goes forth from a living spirit and touches other spirits as with hidden fire, will count for more in the regeneration of the world than all the books ever written.

What, then, will the coming age, what will the twentieth century in which you are to do your best work, demand from the pulpit?

I. It will demand in it the presence of a man. It has been thought that the preacher may be less of a man than others—as alas! he often is;—and know less of the world and human nature. There is a story of a Scotch elder who said, in describing the last three parish ministers: "The first was a minister, but not a man; the second a man, but not a minister; and the one we now have is neither minister nor man." A popular author of our day has gone so far as to speak of the "clerical sex" as if very many of the clergy she had known had not been men, and certainly not manly. Too often ministers of religion have been regarded as members of a Caste, a class within Society, with narrow views and partisan interests. Not seldom, to-day, the minister's is "a fugitive and cloistered virtue" which knows little of the storms and temptations to which men in the world are subjected. The curse of the pulpit is that it has become a profession, a line of life, a source of income, with its poverty and deterioration of motives, its coarseness of feeling, its routine and commonplace. I am convinced that to look upon the pulpit as a profession, a choice to be adopted out of several ways of getting a livelihood,

is fatal to its power. It is a *calling* imperative in its claims, which a man cannot escape without disobedience to the heavenly vision. But it is not a caste with its separate life and standards. The minister must be, in the best sense of the word, a man of the world—at home with all sorts and conditions of men, vividly conscious of the thoughts, hopes, ambitions, interests around him, affecting them with wholesome stimulating power in the masculine energy of his own moral life. A modern critic writes: "How have we heard the average, hard-driven men of the world exclaim that it is all very nice and pretty for the Rev. Mr. So and So to talk, but he doesn't know the city. He lives in a charming fool's paradise of Dorcas Societies, and tea-parties on the Rectory lawn. In short, the implication is that, though he may know a great deal of the life hereafter, he has no practical knowledge of life here. He underestimates its difficulties, has no experience of its temptations, and generally ignores its conditions."

No doubt this is far less true of Nonconformity than of the Established Church, although I fear even of us it is not altogether false. Now thoughtful, hard-headed, much-troubled men of the world ask that the pulpit shall at least be manly, not effeminate; robust in character, not pietistic; practical in aim, not visionary; human in its intercourse, not official. Men demand that the preacher shall be genuinely humane, touching and realising man's life at as many points and as fully as possible. They resent more and more the dogmatism of the mere cleric, the wishy-washy language of the mere sentimentalist. They do not resent the masterful accent of strong conviction—the accent of a vigorous healthy manhood. The mere student, living in a world far withdrawn in all its enchantments from the madding crowd, will never gain their ear or win their allegiance. The warm, red blood of human vitality must tingle in the veins of the preacher, and he must know what a man's life means in its scope, its courage, its weakness, its sore temptations, its present-day diffi-

culties, if he would touch it to some divine issue. He must see things as they verily are, and not as they look in the study. Only a man can give a true exposition of man and human life. Without a rich and free humanity, not that of a sect or a class, the preacher will never know the thoughts of a man. There is a kind of testimony borne to many of our ministers which, in its mild laudation, is most damnatory. Congregations say, "Yes, our minister is a dear, good man; but—." Oh! I always know when a minister is spoken of as "a dear, good man" it will be followed by a "but." Further, I know what that "but" means in nine cases out of ten. It means that he lacks backbone and manly vigour. He is a minister, but not a man. He is thought of as a kindly sentimental creature, who will certainly do no harm, and may even be useful in his way; but not at all the kind of man John Bright used to desire as a companion on a tiger hunt. Yet never did the pulpit more require the virile qualities of manhood than to-day. Men look for energy, resolution, resourcefulness in their leader, a manly heart, a manly bearing. The timid, the faltering, the uncertain, the secluded from life's delightful play and passion will never make the pulpit a power. "Quit you like men!" There's a soldierly maxim for you.

II. The age demands that the preacher shall know the world in which he lives, and more especially his own time—not merely the opinions of his time, but the men and women to whom he ministers in the very fashion of their hearts and minds as they live, and in the environment which so largely shapes their ends. The preacher must be in hearty relation with the great movements and the life-currents of his time, whether they be intellectual, ethical, social, or spiritual. He must not only keep abreast of the knowledge and scholarship of the age in which he finds himself, he must try and understand the forces, hopes and

ideals by which men live, and which sweep the world along "the ringing grooves of change." Too many ministers speak a dialect of the past and think the thoughts of another time; they look at life through the studies of their youth or through the spectacles of an office; they never realise that the age in which they live is a new age, with new ideals, new methods, new difficulties, and new watchwords—a warfare waged with new weapons of immensely wider range and greater precision. Unless we speak the speech of to-day, unless we are in touch with the living thoughts and aims of men, how can we speak with authority? The pulpit has to deal with all the great questions raised by our present civilisation, or want of it, in so far as they touch on ethics and humanity. Unless the pulpit can enter into true and genial relations with all real knowledge, unless it remembers that science is divine truth, that every conquest of knowledge is ultimately power in the things of the soul as in other things, unless it believes that the great forces which are changing our civilisation are a phase in the evolutionary process whereby God is bringing the world on to "one far-off divine event," the pulpit will be swept away as a useless bit of lumber. We must look out upon our time with wide-open eyes, sure that the footsteps of God are to be traced in all its vital movements, even in those that are furthest removed from our own sympathies. Agnosticism, for instance, may be to us the apotheosis of mere ignorance, and socialism the dream of ignorant revolutionaries; but unless we make an earnest effort not only to understand these things but to get into sympathy with the conditions of heart and mind out of which they spring, we shall never breathe into them some breath of heavenly wisdom. "The men who are to speak to the very soul of their time must be of their time, so far at least as knowing their time by life and thought, by wide, honest sympathy and by vivid interest and intelligence." They must enter into all that moves and makes men to-day, into their joys and sorrows, into

their doubts and fears, into their beliefs and denials. The soul and body of the life of their fellows must be known and understood. Only so can the preacher's words hit the mark. There may be many things in the present age, or rather in the twentieth century which is to be your field of ministry, you will not like. Its aims and demands may seem to you unreasonable. But it is still yours to study with patience, to sympathise with its better part, to understand its drift in the evolution of thought, society, and institutions. For thought must be met with thought, and hope with hope, and ideals with ideals, and partial knowledge with a wider knowledge, and a groping conscience with an enlightened conscience. The teachers must teach, only if they would teach with good effect they must know their time with all its ringing actualities. They must have indeed a larger, diviner wisdom than that of their time or they could not teach at all. "That teacher forgets his function who has no wider 'vision' than the horizon of his own fleeting generation. The witness for ideal and immortal things amid the passing forms of life and opinion, the witness for the real and the eternal amid the phases and shadows of earth, he must ever and always maintain his witness; but the more for that wider 'vision' ought he to have the wisdom to understand, the patience to bear with, the insight and foresight to help and lead men in all the ethical relations, the intellectual difficulties, and the spiritual business of their lives." He should know how to guide them through the things and thoughts that make life to the things and thoughts that are eternal life. But to do this he must keep himself in full relation with the activities of his time, sensitive to all those things which are the moving forces of the age.

It has often been a reproach to the pulpit that it is out of touch with the real life of men, their dominant thoughts, their interests, hopes and ambitions. I remember that fine spirit and great preacher, Charles Beard, telling me of a visit he once

received from one of the students of this college, who had recently settled in a neighbouring church. Having ministered there twelve months he came to Mr. Beard in utter despair about his work. He made no headway, seemed powerless to accomplish the slightest good or acquire the least influence; his people indeed attended the services with fair regularity, but he felt himself that his words never touched them, that somehow he never seemed to get near them. Could Mr. Beard advise him? recommend him a course of reading which might be helpful? put him on the right track? Mr. Beard turned round upon his young brother and said, "Do you know what the price of cotton was yesterday?" "No," answered the young man, in great astonishment at such a turn to the conversation. "Do you ever read the *Times'* money article?" "No! it has no interest for me." "But," went on Mr. Beard, "does not that suggest to you a possible secret of your failure? You have no knowledge of what are the great absorbing interests for your congregation six days out of seven; you live entirely outside their world. Here is my advice:—compel yourself to take interest in the things that interest them; it is a first condition of winning them to take interest in the things that are absorbing to you."

Did he mean that a man must needs put the price of cotton into his sermon? Nothing so foolish. The preacher may never say a word in the pulpit about the money market, but his preaching will have a different note if it proceeds from a mind alive to the daily thoughts, excitements, and pursuits of men. His sermons will gain a touch of reality if he no longer stands outside, but gets into frank, intelligent, kindly relation with the world around him. He will find himself endowed with a broader moral power and a surer spiritual touch, able to lay a strong grip on the living hearts of men since he is able to interpret and inspire conscience, conduct, and culture. Men are impatient with the pulpit not because they are unbelievers, but because it seems

to have nothing to say that goes to the quick and hits close upon the certainties of human experience. The preacher must understand his age.

III. The age demands from the pulpit that little understood yet only efficacious feature, spiritual power. I say, *spiritual* power. For this it is not necessary that the preacher should be a very clever man, or a very learned man, or a very eloquent man. Neither is it necessary that he should be a theological expert. These things may lend attractiveness to his preaching, yet not in them is to be found the secret of spiritual power. I am well aware it is far easier to say what it is not than what it is. Like the subtle difference between talent and genius, between intellectual vigour and creative inspiration, between saintliness and morality, it is difficult to define. When we attempt to analyse it we find it escapes our grasp. Nothing is more palpable than its presence or absence, yet no one can tell us adequately in what it consists. Not that we are altogether without a clue to its hidden secret; and if I venture to point out two or three factors in the quest, it is not because they by any means exhaust the analysis, but because spiritual power is at any rate never found without them.

In the first place, spiritual power goes along with strong, personal faith. The preacher must believe his own message with all his heart, and must be loyal to it in his own life. There are the two elements in the faith of which I am speaking,—personal conviction and personal fidelity to conviction. Doubt is the paralysis of preaching; and arrows sent from that bow fall on the ground before you, while strong faith sends them quivering to their destination, No man can speak with "authority" if his own mind is wavering. There are preachers in our midst who, strictly speaking, have no "message" for men at all. Their own minds are haunted by too many suspicions. The things of the

Kingdom of God are shadowy; they believe them in a commonplace kind of way, or because they see no reason to the contrary. Now, no speech about these things is of any value of which this is not the ground—the sight of a man's own eyes, the passion of his own heart, the grip of his own thought. Nay, if these things are to a man just the poetry of the higher life, and not the very facts and law of his own life, he will preach in vain. There is a fatal want of reality in his voice which chills the hearers. Men ask us, with eager intent, "What do you really believe?" It may be that we, too, like our fathers, shall have it laid upon us as a cross we may not refuse, to do a certain amount of critical, destructive, negative work in the pulpit. Denials there must be; they clear the ground for every new bit of positive truth. But it is not by their denials men live and churches conquer. It is the things you do believe, however few, that are vital. And they must possess you, body, soul, and spirit. That saint and prophet, F. D. Maurice, was once asked, "How are we to know when we have got hold of God?" and he answered, "You have not got hold of God; He has got hold of you." It is one thing for you to hold a faith; it is another and a higher thing for a faith to hold you, to dominate you, to possess you through and through. Such a faith is magnetic and contagious. Here is the reason sometimes why simple and unlettered men have greater power over human hearts than the wise and instructed; they speak with the authority which profound personal conviction always gives to a man's words. They "*know* in whom they have believed."

For a second thing, spiritual power has in it the quality of *character*. I do not mean by this that the preacher must be a man of good character, as it is called, that he must be spotless in life and irreproachable in name. That goes without saying. What is meant by character is a distinctly true individuality, so that a man tells by what he is. Character in the intensity of

its individual relation to God—out of which relation it brings light and strength for its brethren. Character in its distinctiveness as entirely a man's own; character in its mass, accent, and quality; character as it realises the ideal flashed into our consciences from the very thought of God is the measure of a man's power. The final fact behind all words is the soul of the speaker. You will remember Froude's remark about the relative influence of Newman and Whateley, when they were contemporaries in the Oriel common room. Whateley, he says, required to bring to their minds the clearest intellectual demonstration before he could lead men, whereas they were moved by anything Newman said, from the mere fact that it was he who said it. It is the possession of this power of producing a distinct moral and spiritual effect by the saying of things which, on the lips of another, would be without point and significance, that makes a true pulpit a force so entirely unique, and differentiates it from literature. It is not the result of wide and exact scholarship, still less has it to do with a commanding presence or a matchless voice; intellectual vigour will not explain it; a forceful will is not its secret. It is never found except with a certain purity and intensity of life added to a vivid God-consciousness. It is related of a certain French preacher that he produced an indescribable emotion amongst a cultured audience by the simple words, "I want you, my dear children, to love God. He is so good." What gave them their effectiveness? The man behind them—his personality and character. Power of this kind gathers about the utterances of one known to be of transparent simplicity, of absolute honesty, of perfect unselfishness, of unconquerable patience and magnanimity; who, it is felt would, without question, sacrifice his dearest interests for the cause of Truth, who is consumed with the passion of goodness. It is a certain singleness and devotion of heart—shining, felt, unmistakeable goodness. Now, what a good man lives by must be good. What is from the heart goes to the heart,

because it has hold upon the things that are deeper than all opinions. Life is more and greater than doctrine—grasps the roots and draws from the springs as neither speech nor thought can. Spiritual power is beyond all eloquence. It may be found in some humble local-preacher, or half-educated captain of the Salvation Army—even in ludicrous forms to the ordinary apprehension, but an apparition of the Divine to those who have the soul to appreciate soul, although it may be destitute of what we call "culture." "Woe is me! woe is me!" exclaimed an old schoolman. "The simple brethren are entering the kingdom while the learned ones are debating if there be one."

These elements of spiritual power lead up, by an almost insensible gradation, to another, which may claim to be the most potent of all. We can "do all things in Him that strengtheneth us" when through much communion we take the divine impress and the baptism of the spirit. In olden time men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. This is no mere figure of speech. There are seasons when all the faculties of the mind are enlarged, when the spirit is bathed in heavenly light, when faith is changed into vision, when love is a consuming flame, and the fleece, once dry as tinder, is wet with the dews of heaven. There are times when the preacher feels "the hand of the Lord" to be upon him and he quivers under the awful touch. Then his simplest word is with power. He is in contact with heaven, and life-currents flow through him to the people. It is through the heart's converse with the living fountain of grace and goodness that we reach the nethermost spring of inspiration. So to live in communion with God that we realise the beauty of holiness, see the invisible, find the supernatural in the natural, the divine in the human, heaven on earth, God everywhere—so to live amid all the interests and activities of earth that we yet "dwell far in the unapparent"—this is to touch the hidden source of strength and influence. "The stream that is to flow, broad and

life-giving, through many lands must have its source high up among the pure snows that cap the hills of God." Our work is in the hot, busy, fertile plain, and yet to be so busy planning, achieving, defending, persuading, that we have no leisure of heart for quiet contemplation, no time for a lonely journey to the hills, is to starve the soul and dry up its healing virtue. It is only when we come forth from the secret places of the Most High that our faces shine, that our raiment glistens, and that our utterance has in it the music of heaven.

Gentlemen, it is no holiday task to which you are called. There are reasons which make the work of the pulpit more onerous to-day that in any age of Christendom. Never was life characterised by such intensity,—in business, in pleasure, in art, men bend the bow to the breaking point. Never did civilisation present more awful contrasts of penury and wealth, of heroic effort and deepest degradation, of monstrous inequalities of condition, advantage and opportunity, than to-day. Never did time hold in its womb so many perplexing questions; never were the questions so momentous for good and evil. Yet never were men more anxious for light and leading. The obligations of the preacher seem to be enlarging beyond those of former times—he is called to greater efforts in a wider field. And amid the strife of words and the keen pressure of material pursuits, never were men so interested in the great things of life, conduct and eternity. The cry, the honest cry on all sides is, "Come over and help us if you can." There never was a time, you may depend on it, in which earnest speech, touched with the fire of love and truth, was in less danger of meeting with no response. In a thousand directions men are wistfully seeking the unknown God if happily they may find Him.

Here is the greatness, grandeur and glory of your mission. Its magnitude may well appal the bravest. "Who is sufficient for these things?" Grave, sweet, and majestic comes the answer,

"Our sufficiency is of God." The first and last secret of power is in life with God. You must not seldom shut the door on all your plans, on all your energies, on all your interests, hopes and cares that you may be alone with God. You must, amid the stress and strain of a thousand activities, learn to *live within to God.* The things of service that demand your attention are innumerable, calling for patience, wisdom, self-denial, fortitude, labour without measure. No real, human interest, nothing that stirs, troubles, or attracts men ought to be too great or too little for you. The demands made upon you will drain your resources, drain you of nervous power, drain your sympathy and strength. Unless there is a well-worn track between you and the hills from whence cometh help, how is strength to be renewed, hope rekindled, and weariness refreshed? Only there in communion, solitude and silence can you keep from decay that tenderness and delicacy of spirit without which you become a mere official; only there can you find the love, wisdom and power that are needed for the issues which belong to the ministry of souls.